

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 04286 010838Z

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ACTION EA-10

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INFO AMCONSUL MELBOURNE  
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CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, AS

SUBJECT: LANDSLIDE VOTE FOR LIBERAL CANDIDATE IN TASMANIAN  
BY-ELECTION

1. SUMMARY: BY-ELECTION JUNE 28 IN FEDERAL TASMANIAN ELECTORATE OF BASS RESULTED IN HANDSOME WIN BY LIBERAL PARTY CANDIDATE, WITH SWING OF 17 PERCENT AWAY FROM LABOR. RESULTS REDUCE LABOR MAJORITY IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM FIVE TO THREE SEATS, BUT LABOR GOVERNMENT NOT RPT NOT IN DANGER. OUTCOME IS, HOWEVER, INDICATION THAT RECENT PUBLIC OPINION POLLS HAVE, IF ANYTHING, UNDERSTATED TREND AGAINST LABOR GOVERNMENT. FOLLOWING REPORT LARGELY PREPARED BY CONSULTE GENERAL IN MELBOURNE, WITH CONTRIBUTION BY EMBASSY. END SUMMARY.

2. VIRTUALLY COMPLETE RETURNS IN LAUNCESTON, TASMANIA, BY-ELECTION HELD JUNE 28 SHOW LIBERAL CANDIDATE KEVIN NEWMAN POLLING 22,561 VOTES; LABOR CANDIDATE JOHN MACROSTIE 14,437 VOTES. THIS IS 17 PERCENT SWING AGAINST LABOR, LOWERING GOVERNMENT MAJORITY IN FEDERAL PARLIAMENT FROM FIVE SEATS TO THREE. REMAINING 6 PERCENT OF SOME 40,000 VOTES CAST WENT TO FOUR INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES.

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PAGE 02 CANBER 04286 010838Z

3. WEEKEND MEDIA REPORTING IS FILLED WITH REACTION, CONSENSUS OF WHICH EMPHASIZES LABOR LOSS RATHER THAN LIBERAL VICTORY. OPPOSITION LEADER MALCOLM FRASER, WHO PLAYED MAJOR ROLE IN CAMPAIGN, IS REPORTED AS STILL RULING OUT EARLY GENERAL ELECTION, BUT OBSERVERS CLAIM HE WILL HENCEFORTH BE UNDER GREATER PRESSURE TO CAUSE SUCH ELECTION BY SENATE ACTION WITHHOLDING SUPPLY, DURING UP-COMING BUDGET DEBATE. SIR CHARLES COURT, PREMIER OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, HAS CALLED ON OPPOSITION LEADER TO FORCE LABOR GOVERNMENT OUT OF OFFICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

4. IN RITUAL POST MORTEM, LABOR LEADERS IN SEVERAL STATES, AND FEDERAL PARTY EXECUTIVES INTERVIEWED, BLAME DEBACLE ON PRIME MINISTER, WHO ALONE, IN OPINION OF MOST, WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ELECTION AT TIME UNFAVORABLE TO LABOR PARTY.

5. SIGNIFICANTLY, SOUTH AUSTRALIA PREMIER DON DUNSTAN, FACING STATE WIDE ELECTION JULY 12, HAS INDICATED PRIME MINISTER WILL QTE TAKE PART IN CAMPAIGN EVENTS ALREADY SCHEDULED END QTE BUT QUICKLY REITERATED THAT ISSUES ARE STATE ISSUES AND HE, DUNSTAN WAS RUNNING CAMPAIGN. DUNSTAN ANGRILY DENIED STATEMENT BY DEPUTY FEDERAL OPPOSITION LEADER LYNCH THAT HE (DUNSTAN) HAD ASKED WHITLAM NOT RPT NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIAN CAMPAIGN.

6. MRS. KATHLEEN VEEN, SECRETARY TASMANIA ALP, TOLD LABATT JUNE 30, THAT LOCAL PARTY IS QTE VERY BITTER END QTE, AND FEELS NO RESPONSIBILITY AT ALL FOR DEFEAT. FEDERAL LABOR PARTY MOVED INTO LAUNCESTON AND CONDUCTED CAMPAIGN WITHOUT INVOLVING PEOPLE WHO HAD DELIVERED DISTRICT FOR PARTY FOR OVER FORTY YEARS; THEREFORE CAMPAIGN EFFORT STOPPED QTE INSIDE DOOR END QTE OF HEADQUARTERS. LEFT WING UNIONS WHICH HAD FOISTED JOKE CANDIDATE ON PARTY, ACCORDING TO MRS. VENN, WERE NO HELP; AND RIGHT WING UNIONS, LED BY ACTU STATE SECRETARY BRIAN HARADINE, ALSO STAYED AWAY. AS RESULT, LOCALS WERE INVOLVED ONLY ON POLLING DAY WHEN THEY DUTIFULLY APPEARED BUT DID NOT PERFORM AS ELECTIONEERS AT ALL.

7. HOWEVER, VENN ADMITTED DIFFERENT CANDIDATE WOULD NOT HAVE INSURED LABOR WIN. INDEED, SHE FINDS SOME CONSOLATION FROM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 CANBER 04286 010838Z

FACT THAT CANDIDATE WAS POOR ONE, SINCE DEFEAT OF GOOD MAN WOULD HAVE BEEN REAL DISASTER AND MIGHT HAVE RUINED HIS FUTURE.

8. MRS. VENN INCREASINGLY CONCERNED OVER FACT THAT BILL DUTHIE, LABOR MEMBER FEDERAL PARLIAMENT FOR WILMOT (TASMANIAN ELECTORATE IMMEDIATELY ADJOINING BASS) SINCE 1949, HAS ALREADY INDICATED HE WILL NOT RUN NEXT TIME. VENN DOES NOT HAVE ANY ONE

ON HAND TO TAKE HIS PLACE. LABATT COMMENTS THIS IS SIGNIFICANT AS WILMOT CONSTITUENCY TAKES UP TWO-THIRDS OF ISLAND STATE, AND IT IS STRANGE NOT TO FIND SUITABLE LABOR CANDIDATE IN AREA WITH SOME 47,000 VOTERS.

9. COMMENT: TASMANIA PERFORMANCE IS EVIDENCE THAT PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM HAS SLIPPED TO SOME EXTENT AS POLITICAL TACTICIAN AND AS CAMPAIGNER. HE PUT IN MAJOR EFFORT IN BASS, SPENDING ALMOST WEEK THERE, COMPARED TO JUST OVER TWO DAYS FOR OPPOSITION LEADER FRASER. MOST OBSERVERS UNANIMOUS IN COMMENT THAT FRASER'S REPUTATION AS CAMPAIGNER HAS BEEN GREATLY ENHANCED BY HIS PERFORMANCE. ALP FEDERAL EXECUTIVE MEETING SCHEDULED FOR LATE JULY IS LIKELY TO BE SCENE FOR SHARP CRITICISM OF PRIME MINISTER'S PERFORMANCE AND DECISION TO ALLOW FORMER MINISTER FOR DEFENSE BARNARD TO RESIGN AT TIME WHEN POLLS CLEARLY ADVERSE TO LABOR. BASS RESULTS SHOW THAT POLLS, IF ANYTHING, TEND TO UNDERSTATE EXTENT OF SWING AGAINST LABOR. FOR EXAMPLE, WHILE THERE WAS OVERALL SWING AGAINST LABOR PARTY OF 17 PERCENT IN BASS, BLUE-COLLAR AND WORKING CLASS DISTRICTS OF ELECTORATE SHOWED SWING OF UP TO 21 PERCENT AGAINST LABOR PARTY. A MITIGATING FACTOR IN THE SWING AGAINST LABOR IN BASS WAS FACT THAT THE FORMER INCUMBENT IN THE SEAT, LANCE BARNARD, WAS UNIVERSALLY LIKED AND RESPECTED. A PORTION OF THE SWING IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE FACT THAT BARNARD WAS NOT RPT NOT RUNNING. AT MOST, HOWEVER, THIS MAY HAVE ACCOUNTED FOR 4 PERCENT OR 5 PERCENT AND CANNOT EXPLAIN THE MASSIVE SWING THAT OCCURRED.

10. PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM HAS AVOIDED COMMENT ON THE BASS BY-ELECTION. HE WENT TO CONSIDERABLE LENGTHS TO AVOID MEETING OR BEING PHOTOGRAPHED BY PRESS WHEN MEETING WITH TORRES STRAITS ISLANDERS IN SYDNEY JUNE 30, AND HIS OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN HAS GIVEN TERSE QTE NO COMMENT END QTE TO REQUESTS FOR WHITLAM'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 CANBER 04286 010838Z

REACTION TO BASS OUTCOME.

11. REDUCTION OF LABOR GOVERNMENT'S MAJORITY IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM FIVE TO THREE (IN PRACTICE, TO TWO, AS ONE OF THE MAJORITY OF THREE IS SPEAKER OF HOUSE, WHO DOES NOT VOTE EXCEPT IN CASE OF TIE) HAS NO IMMEDIATE EFFECT. AUSTRALIAN VOTING DISCIPLINE IS IRON-CLAD. HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN SEVERE BLOW DEALT TO SELF-CONFIDENCE OF ALP BY BASS RESULTS. THERE IS SUBSTANCE TO OPPOSITION LEADER FRASER'S COMMENT AFTER THE ELECTION, TO THE EFFECT THAT AFTER TWO MORE BY-ELECTIONS, LABOR WILL BE OUT OF GOVERNMENT. THIS IS UNLIKELY DEVELOPMENT, BUT ON PRESENT READING FRASER'S COMMENT IS ACCURATE.  
GREEN

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## Message Attributes

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